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Differentiated Assessments In A Social Studies Middle School Class

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DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENTS IN A SOCIAL STUDIES MIDDLE SCHOOL
CLASS

By

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Both differentiation and assessment are topics that are continually discussed in education. Students come to school with a variety of different backgrounds and learning needs. Teachers need to respond to this variance among learners in the classroom. Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all these learners is an expectation of educators.

Assessments are also a critical part of the learning process. Teachers use assessment to monitor the teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers should determine the learning outcomes, then create an assessment that measures those outcomes, and finally analyze and use the assessment results to adjust teaching to meet the needs of learners in the classroom, (Linn 2000; Ali, 2015; Tomlinson, Moon, & Imbeau, 2015). Ideally, assessments should give students an opportunity to showcase all of their understanding and knowledge.

Knowing that assessments should align to standards and outcomes and that assessments are a critical part of the learning process, besides being aware that assessment should drive instruction, one wonders why there is so much emphasis placed on differentiating instruction, but less emphasis on differentiating assessment. If the instruction in a classroom has been differentiated, then shouldn't the assessment be differentiated too?

In this chapter, I will first describe my professional journey and how my experiences lead me to this current research topic: How can a choice of differentiated

assessments lead to better quality assessments and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge in 7th grade United States History students?

I will then describe the context and rationale for the project and how the differentiated assessments fit into the bigger topic of assessment. The chapter will conclude with a summary and a preview of the coming chapters.

History Day

Eight years ago, three teachers and I decided to start teaching History Day to our 7th-grade students as an interdisciplinary unit. The other seventh- grade Social Studies teacher and I teamed up with two Language and Literature teachers to work to create a History Day unit to teach together. In our school, History Day is an intense four-month-long research project. To complete the project, students take an active role in the learning process. Students are able to show their ownership in the project by choosing their topic. Once they choose their topic, the students need to critically analyze primary and secondary sources to build their own knowledge of the topic. After students have interpreted their sources, they need to take what they have learned and draw conclusions about the significance of their topic in history. Also, students do have a choice to work by themselves or to work collaboratively with a group. The role of the teacher in the History Day project is to mentor and guide students through the process. Teachers need to continually discuss projects with students and provide feedback. After students are done with their research, students need to choose one of five different ways to demonstrate their knowledge: documentary, website, exhibit board, performance, or paper. The rubric

for History Day is essentially the same for every student regardless of what category they choose to use to present their knowledge.

Every year, as I am grading the History Day projects in January, I am impressed with the extremely high quality of work that my students have produced. As the years continued, I began to really reflect on what was happening. What I noticed was that throughout the school year, I assessed students often, I used a number of different summative assessments, sometimes I used tests, essays, and sometimes a project. On average, the highest quality of student work produced for any assessment throughout the year was always for History Day. I begin to think about why that was happening and how I could translate that high quality of work to other summative assessments.

I have been teaching for 17 years, I use both formative and summative assessments to guide and differentiate instruction. However, other than for History Day, I do not use student differentiated assessment choices.

Common Assessments

One of my district's initiatives partially contradicts my thinking, reflection, and experience with the History Day assessment. About five years ago, my school district started a workshop week with professional development around common assessments and a push toward common grade alike/subject alike assessments. The district dedicated two years of professional development to this initiative. We collaborated with grade alike/subject alike teachers to study the State Standards for our course, then we worked to clearly define the learning outcomes expected for each standard. Once we had broken down each standard, we collaborated to create assessments to measure each standard.

The goal of the common assessments was to ensure that every student had access to the same learning. The district wanted each collaborative group of grade alike/subject alike teachers to discuss the standards, design the assessment based on the standards, to make sure that what teachers were teaching lined up to the standards. The expectation from the district was that we were all committed to using the common assessments and that we were planning our learning activities around those assessments.

This was very powerful professional development for me. The work we did to collaboratively clarify what the standards we are asking students to know and to do helped us to really talk through and create rigorous learning activities. In addition, after clarifying the standards, our team could write essential questions and assessments with certainty. It was more effective and efficient to write the assessments because we had already talked through exactly what we should be assessing.

Using learning and reflection from both of these experiences around assessment, I would like to determine the best way to assess students at the end of units. I would like to look at both common and differentiated assessments. In particular, I am interested to see if using the United States History State Standards, I could create rubrics that measure student learning of the standard, but also allow for student choice of differentiated assessments. I want to see if given a choice of assessments, do students create a higher quality product? In other words, I would like to investigate if a “marriage” of the two approaches outlined above could provide the best assessment for my students.

Current Study: Brief Consideration of Previous Research

Over the last five years, I have used the common assessments that we developed collaboratively in our grade alike/ subject alike teacher groups. Some of the assessments are traditional assessments like tests and essays, others are more authentic or performance-based such as creating journals, debates, running mock factories and giving speeches.

For each standard, I use the common assessment and create learning activities for the students to facilitate their mastery of the content. I know that my classes have a variety of students from diverse backgrounds, with different levels of background knowledge. In order to teach all of my students, I work to create learning activities that reach a variety of different learning styles for every unit. If we know that students perform better when given a platform that fits their learning style, (Ali, 2015) doesn't it make sense to offer students a choice of assessments that works best for them?

There is a considerable amount of research around assessment and differentiation and on using differentiated assessment. As will be detailed in Chapter Two, the research I have found supports using differentiated assessments. The action research that I found focuses on both teacher and student preferences about differentiated assessment. The researchers in the action research studies that I found asked the teachers to use differentiated assessments in their classrooms and then conducted interviews to see if the teachers and the students preferred a more traditional one assessment option or if they preferred differentiated assessments (Ali, 2015; Burns, Smeaton, & Water, 2004).

My capstone will attempt to fit a unique niche that has not been addressed fully before; the focus will be on whether a choice of differentiated assessments can lead to better quality assessments products from students and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge so that an instructor can develop and offer targeted instruction. I will create new, differentiated assessments for the first chapter of a seventh grade United States History class.

Conclusion and Chapter Previews

In Chapter One, I have introduced the topic of this project which I will explore through the guiding question, *How can a choice of differentiated assessments lead to better quality assessments and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge in 7th grade United States History students?* The section narrated my personal journey through summative assessments and how it motivated me to focus on this topic. It then moved to the rationale of this project by explaining the current context of assessments in a 7th grade United States History Classroom.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss and review the literature that describes the importance of differentiation assessments. I will also incorporate literature that discusses student choice and learning styles. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the methods I will use to research my topic and will explain the details of the project, including its format, audience, and setting. Finally, Chapter Four will conclude the study with recommendations and thoughts to consider.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to investigate the question: *How can a choice of differentiated assessments lead to better quality assessments and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge in 7th grade United States History students?* Chapter One described how this question stemmed from my experiences as a teacher and introduced my assessment project in broad terms.

Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the research that supports my capstone project and discusses the reasoning behind it, pointing to a gap in the research. First, the research is organized by assessment and within that by the following types of assessment: traditional assessment, common assessment, performance-based assessment, and differentiated assessment. Next, the research summary moves to the topic of differentiation, then Multiple Intelligences and learning styles, student choice, students role in designing assessments, student self-assessment, and finally the criteria for determining what should be assessed. Then Last, I will briefly outline the project that will be described in detail in Chapter Three.

Assessment

Assessment is a critical part of developing subject achievement and promoting student learning and motivation (Deneen, Fulmer, Brown, Tan, Leong, & Tay, 2019;

Hardiman, M. & Whitman, 2014; Stiggins, 2017). Assessment is one of the most important things teachers can do to help students learn. Often assessment is looked at as a tool to measure student success, but it really is a factor and a cause of student success. Teachers can enhance or destroy a student's desire to learn through assessment, (Gardner, 2013). There are many different types of assessments used by educators, but they should all be used to refine teacher instruction, improve student learning and provide feedback (Wormeli, 2008). Assessment should also be used to highlight student strength and to help students learn about themselves as learners (Stiggins, 2017). Research shows that teachers use 33% of their time with students for assessment (Frey & Schmitt, 2010). Based on the fact that teachers dedicate so much of their student contact time to assessment, it is clear that assessment is important and it needs to be effective in boosting student achievement. Unfortunately, too often teachers spend all of their time planning and preparing for class, as a result the creation of effective assessment is often neglected or overlooked.

A well developed assessment needs to contain a number of key components. To begin with the assessment should be meaningful and relevant to the students. The students should receive feedback throughout the assessment, not just at the end. The assessment should be able to measure student learning and growth. The students should be active participants in the assessments, (Will, 2017).

To improve student learning, assessments need to be a continuous part of the learning process. Classroom assessments need to be directly linked to course objectives and measure student application of knowledge. Before creating assessments or teaching,

instructors need to identify their learning outcomes and establish, “what is most important to teach and what students should really learn” (Angelo & Cross, 2018, p. 8-9). After determining learning outcomes, assessments should be created to reflect teaching pedagogy. Assessments, both formative and summative, need to gather student data on knowledge, skills, or beliefs.

Formative assessment is assessment for learning and occurs concurrently with instruction (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2016). It is continuous, formal or informal checks, on both the teaching and learning that is taking place. Formative assessment provides feedback for both the student and the teacher on how learning is progressing (Blaz, 2018) and it shapes the next phrase of instruction. Formative assessment creates an opportunity to make students’ thinking visible to the teacher. By using formative assessment the instructor can see what the student has mastered and what they still need to learn. Formative assessment also creates an opportunity for a teacher to offer intervention if needed; a teacher could offer support to struggling students or enrichment to students who had already mastered the standard (Blaz, 2018).

Formative assessments creates an opportunity for teachers to notice and respond to patterns in their classroom. For example, teachers might notice a pattern in common mistakes that students are making or teachers might notice what the classroom needs to be successful in the learning.

Summative assessment is an assessment of learning that is generally used to summarize what has been learned (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). These assessments usually take place at the end of a unit or chapter or concept and the scores are often

reported. Summative assessments are used to evaluate student mastery of the concept and they should align with the class standards or objectives. Summative assessments should also be used to evaluate teacher effectiveness and performance (Blaz, 2018).

“Although summative/evaluative assessments often receive the most attention, formative assessments provide critical “along the way” information to guide instruction in response to the nature and needs of diverse learners” (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 71). In both formative and summative assessments, instructors need to analyze that data to determine if and how well student learning is matching course expectations. Effective classroom assessment helps teachers to find out what students are learning and how well they are learning it (Tomlinson, Moon, & Imbeau, 2015). Assessments also are used to not only inform instructors but also to inform students and their parents about student learning. “There is no such thing as effective teaching in the absence of learning. Teaching without learning is just talking” (Angelo & Cross, p. 3).

Decades of research have produced recommendations for teachers about assessment. It is now clear that teachers should be using fewer traditional assessments and more performance or project-based assessments. Teachers should also be tying assessments directly to match standards or course objectives and formative and summative assessments should impact teaching (Frey & Schmitt, 2010). Also teachers should be giving students second chances to demonstrate success to improve student learning (Scherer, 2010).

A comprehensive 2019 survey by Deneen, Fulmer, Brown, Tan, Leong, & Tay, surveyed teachers about their values, attitudes, and practices around assessment. The

study showed that most teachers value assessment and that they believed assessment should align with curriculum and engage students. However, the study also showed that teachers have a hard time putting all of their beliefs around assessment into practice. It was clear from the study that teachers used both formative and summative assessments frequently, but they did not feel they had been adequately prepared to analyze assessment data to drive instruction. The study indicated that teachers believed that they should be using more authentic performance or project-based assessments; however, teachers still admitted to using more traditional forms of assessment. Traditional forms of assessment are often easier to grade, less subjective and less time consuming. Performance or project-based assessments are often more time consuming and they often require more student specific feedback. In addition, it was reported by teachers that their assessments were not always engaging to students.

Having covered assessment in broad terms, I will now consider the following types of assessment: traditional, common, project or performance-based, and differentiated.

Traditional assessments. Traditional assessments refer to typical or conventional methods of assessing students, such as tests, quizzes, or essays. Teachers and schools often use traditional assessments because they are objective and easy to score. Tests are also a familiar format of assessment to teachers, students, and parents. Teachers feel comfortable using tests, students are familiar with tests as assessments, and parents understand the data from tests. They are often considered to be reliable and valid by teachers, students and parents. Often teachers use traditional assessments created by

textbook or curriculum companies, some of which do not align to specific state standards or course outcomes.

When teachers use a traditional assessment, it is usually as a separate activity distinct from teaching and learning. The assessor (teacher) usually remains objective and uninvolved (Abeywickrama, 2012). Traditional assessments are often used to compare student achievements and to make generalized explanations or predictions about groups of students (Abeywickrama, 2012; Ali, 2015). Traditional assessments are not individualized and they usually have an impact or a consequence (positive or negative) to students; for example, they can determine if a student passes or fails a class. They are often used to group students based on achievement (Abeywickrama, 2012).

Although traditional assessments are usually fast and easy to score and they give the appearance that they are fair, they are often indirect and inauthentic (Semire, 2003). They are limited by the fact that they usually measure only what a student can do at that particular time. Traditional assessment also often focus on lower-level cognitive skills, memorization, and recall. They do not engage higher-order thinking and they usually expect learners to display their learning in one, standardized, predetermined way (Semire, 2003). Often traditional assessments are used to rank students, and generally assessments designed for ranking are generally not good instruments for helping teachers improve their instruction or meeting the needs of individual students (Scherer, 2010).

Common assessments. A common assessment is an assessment given by two or more educators to examine results. Common assessments are created collaboratively by a group of teachers who teach the same subject, to the same age group and who meet

regularly. As a group, these teachers work to set achievement goals for their students. The group of teachers identifies essential and valued standards they feel students should master. They create and share common lessons and assessments, both formative and summative.

According to Frey & Schmitt (2010), research recommends using teacher-made tests, over tests produced by textbook companies. These assessments both encourage regular feedback to students on the standards and accountability of teachers (Ali, 2015). “The use of common assessments increases the likelihood that students will have access to the same curriculum, acquire the same essential knowledge and skills, take assessments of the same rigor, and have their work judged according to the same criteria,” (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2017).

Similar to traditional assessments, common assessments are often perceived to be fair. Common assessments do have some strengths since they are created collaboratively by teachers and align with the standard or course expectations. On the other hand, common assessments are limited by the fact that they, like traditional assessments, usually ask students to demonstrate their learning in one predetermined way.

Performance or project-based assessments. A performance or project-based assessment is an assessment where students display their knowledge by using concepts or skills in an authentic form. Authentic assessments teach students real-life skills, by asking students to apply their knowledge in a project or performance from a real-world situation (Blaz, 2008). Students make meaning of their new learning through these real-world activities. Performance or project-based assessments engage students and they lead to

higher performance on standardized tests because they ensure that students learn the targeted information well, through application.

Authentic assessment is an ongoing process that requires teachers to frequently view and to continually offer feedback. It creates an opportunity for teachers to notice and evaluate individual students, even in group work. During authentic performance-based assessments, teachers can evaluate the process as well as the product (Prestidge & Glaser, 2000).

“Middle schools, in particular, provide a promising environment for innovation and best practice recommendations specifically aimed at that level include the utilization of non-traditional or modern methods of classroom assessment and to utilize frequent assessment” (Frey & Schmitt, 2010, p. 108).

Performance or project-based assessments have a lot of positive aspects because they are authentic and engaging to students. They also usually assess higher-order thinking skills. However, performance or project-based assessments do have some limitations. They are very time-consuming. They potentially can take a lot of class time for student work and they are not usually effective to grade, causing teacher feedback to be slow.

Differentiated assessments. Differentiated assessment is a form of assessment that takes the differences between students into consideration. Students need multiple ways to demonstrate their learning (Blaz, 2008). A differentiated assessment can be very effective when used appropriately for students with differing strengths and weaknesses, allowing all students to benefit from the assessment and achieve success. If used

correctly, differentiated assessments also shape differentiated instruction (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2010; Ali, 2015). A well-designed differentiated assessment reflects student learning, achievement, and motivation using relevant classroom activities (Blaz, 2008).

In creating and using effective differentiated assessment, teachers need to consider certain qualities. Ali, 2015, among others, suggested the following criteria for consideration:

- Choice: students need to have a choice in the learning activity and the assessment product. For example, a teacher could offer a Tic-Tac-Toe board of assessment choices for students.
- Consideration of students' learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses, so teachers need to include assessment choices that fit the needs of many learning styles.
- The assessment needs to be authentic and problem or project-based and groups need to vary. Students should be able to choose if they are working alone or in a group.
- Finally, the assessment needs to be flexible enough that adaptations can be made for all learners (Ali, 2015, p. 30).

Along with Ali 2015, other educators have noted that differentiated assessments allow for variety in how students demonstrate their learning and skills, but they also allow teachers to collect plenty of data to determine if students are achieving the expected outcomes of a course. "Differentiated assessment pinpoints gaps in knowledge to inform

instruction and improve learning differentiated,” (Wormeli, 2008, p. 52). Differentiated assessments are highly effective in student learning and tailoring learning to meet the needs of students from diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds, (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2010).

Many teachers value and support the use of differentiated assessment. They recognize that it values individual students. According to Burns, Smeaton, & Waters (2004), while students worked on differentiated assessment, teachers noticed that student enthusiasm and engagement was very high. Another benefit to differentiated assessment is creative expression. The teachers noted creative expression in a choice of assessment led to more confidence and connections to prior learning, (Burns, Smeaton, & Waters, 2004).

However, according to the study Ali conducted in (2015), many teachers express challenges to implementing differentiated assessments. Teachers believe that there are both instructional and institutional obstacles. The teachers in the study expressed concerns about large class sizes and teaching loads. They also worried that they lacked the training to develop assessments that valued the needs of all learners (Ali, 2015).

Many students favor differentiated assessment over traditional assessments. Students responded well to having choice; they felt valued, motivated and engaged. Students reported a preference for being able to choose to work in a group or to work individually. Also, students felt in control of their learning and they reported that they had worked hard, believed that they were successful, learned a great deal, and appreciated the opportunity to be creative (Burns, Smeaton, & Waters, 2004). Differentiated assessment

allows students to make choices, self-evaluate, and produce a product that reflects their knowledge and that they are proud of, (Blaz, 2008).

Just as students differ in their preferred way of showing their learning, students differ in their preferred way of learning and processing information. Differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment go hand and hand and strengthen the responsiveness of a classroom.

Differentiation

Differentiation is an instructor's response to each individual learner's need. Students differ from one another in a variety of ways (Hertberg-Davis, 2009). Students differ in background knowledge, motivation, skills, interests, readiness, learning profile, experiences, and culture. In a differentiated classroom, an instructor matches the learning experience to the specific needs of each student, with the goal to maximize the capability of each learner. "Learners differ in their gifts and talents and that to teach them well, the teacher must start where the individuals are," (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 287).

In a differentiated classroom, a teacher needs to plan all parts of the learning process with the students' needs in mind, (Dunn & Darlington, 2016). The teacher needs to study and respond appropriately to all learner variance. The teacher must be sensitive to all of their students' needs and learning styles. Based on all students and their learning needs, the instruction must make sure that each student has the specific strategies available to them to meet the standards.

A critical piece of an efficiently differentiated classroom in ongoing assessment, (Tomlinson, 2013). In order to maximize the learning potential of all students based on their individual needs, the teacher must be assessing student learning needs daily.

In this section, I have considered assessment in general, and specific types of assessment in particular; traditional assessment, common assessment, performance or project-based assessment, and differentiated assessment. I have also examined briefly how differentiated assessment is linked to overall differentiation in teaching. Discussion so far suggests that differentiated assessment strategies should be adopted to increase learning and achievement. In the next section, I will look at Multiple Intelligences, learning styles and student choice. I will be connecting these topics to assessment.

Multiple Intelligences and Assessment

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences stated that people have several ways of processing information, and proposed seven different intelligences that are all of equal importance. In his work, Gardner defines intelligence as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings" (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). In a classroom, teachers need to honor all of these intelligences. It is important that teachers recognize, teach, and assess in a way that all of these intelligences are considered (Brualdi, 1998). Gardner's work and Ali's 2015 study, covered earlier, suggest that learning styles and student choice should be carefully considered in creating assessments.

Learning styles. Students differ from one another in a variety of ways. One specific way that they differ is in preferred learning style. "A learning style is not in itself

an ability but rather a preferred way of using one's abilities" (Hatami, 2012, p. 488.) In each classroom, many different learning styles can be found. Different learning styles can affect how students think, learn, absorb information, process new learning or demonstrate knowledge. Students learn and demonstrate knowledge and skills more effectively when they can process information in their preferred learning style (Cuevas, 2015).

Student Choice

It has been stated that there are factors other than natural ability that influence children and whether they use and develop their skills effectively (Dweck, 1986). Research shows that allowing students choice improves the quality of instruction, assessment, and student success (Mcdowell, Schmittzehe, Duerden, Cernusca, Collier, & Woelk, 2019; Parker, Novak, & Bartell, 2017; Williams, Wallace, & Sung, 2016). It is important to give students choice in the classroom because it increases student motivation and engagement. According to Perks (2010), choice is a motivator of unmotivated and apathetic students and students take a more active role in their learning. There are "factors that can help teachers design choices that have the potential to positively influence motivation and achievement," (Perks, 2010, p. 2). One of the factors is a sense of control. If students are allowed choices in the classroom, including a choice of assessment product it teaches students they have influence and control in the outcomes in their life. Another factor that can positively influence motivation is a sense of purpose. If students have a voice and choice in their assessment product they are more likely to see the purpose of the assessment and the learning. The third factor is a sense of competence.

With student choice, students receive a more personalized learning experience and they feel valued (Mcdowell, et. al, 2019; Parker, Novak, & Bartell, 2017). Student choice also allows students to engage in different learning styles. Students can make choices to support their preferred learning style, so teachers are able to capitalize on students' strengths and students will feel more competent and confident.

Students role in designing assessments

Motivating students to learn is one of the most important aspects of teaching. Students are motivated by a number of factors including developing meaningful and respectful relationships with students and growing a community of learners. Developing assessments that honor student perspective and allow all students to be successful is a key factor in student motivation. Some assessment practices, such as not honoring student perspective or high stakes testing can have a negative impact on students, (Gardner, 2013).

One way a teacher can motivate students and also create meaningful relationships with students is involving students in creating assessments. By allowing students to be involved in creating assessment it helps students to understand the reason for the assessment and the student is more likely to believe in the value of the assessment. Research also shows that when students are involved in creating the assessment it improves learning, (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002). When students are motivated and value the assessment it promotes the goal of student learning, (Gardner, 13). In addition, the students attention and engagement is high, (Will, 2017). Also when students are engaged,

teachers are able to use their time in class monitoring student learning, instead of student behavior. Teachers are able to use their time checking for understanding and learning.

When students are involved in creating their own assessments the students are asked to demonstrate their learning and knowledge, using high order thinking skills and showing deeper learning. Student led assessments are usually more personalized to the needs of all types of learners and more student-centered. Teachers give up some of the control to the students, giving students a greater sense of agency. Since the assessments are more personalized they are more meaningful to students which led to higher student performance (Will, 2017).

Allowing more student led assessments lends well to having more inquiry based or performance based assessments in class. This type of assessment is a process that develops real world skills in students, as opposed to a test, which is typically a one day event, not a process.

Student led assessment also help to develop reflection skills in skills. When allowing student to help create their own assessment, teachers should also have students evaluate their own work, grade themselves, and explain the grade. Teachers do still determine the final grade, but students play a role in the evaluation.

Student self-assessment

Creating opportunities for student self-assessment is another way to create student motivation and enhance learning. Student self-assessment should not be just something that teachers add to assessment, but it should be a way to transform teaching. In creating opportunities for student self -assessment, teachers need to make sure certain qualities are

present. Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009, among others, suggested the following criteria for consideration:

- awareness of the value of self-assessment,
- access to clear criteria on which to base the assessment,
- a specific task or performance to assess,
- models of self-assessment,
- direct instruction in and assistance with self-assessment,
- Practice,
- cues regarding when it is appropriate to self-assess, and
- opportunities to revise and improve the task or performance, (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009, p. 12).

Well designed opportunities for student self assessment, that contain the above recommended qualities, offer many benefits for students. It promotes high student agency. Students need to be aware and familiar with the learning goals of the assessment, which means that students have to have ownership over their learning. In addition, self-assessment encourages students to academically self-regulate, monitor, and manage their own learning. Students are required to think about the quality of their own work which boosts engagement, learning and achievement.

Criteria for determining what should be assessed

To maintain educational equality and to ensure that students are prepared citizens, most states create learning standards for schools. These standards are written statements of what a student should know and what they should be able to do by the end of a course.

Teachers have a professional and ethical obligation to align their teaching and their assess these academic state standards. Although this sounds simple, the process of alignment is really complex, on going, and time consuming. LaMara, 2001, among others, suggested the following criteria for consideration:

- Teachers need to conduct a systematic review of standards.
- Teachers need to conduct a systematic review of assessments.
- Determine which standard or standards each assessment measures.
- Create additional assessments to assess missing standards. (La Mara, 2001).

With the importance of measuring students ability to master standards, alignment is critical. Alignment needs to be the bases of creating and implementing assessments. An assessment needs to be aligned to the standards to be considered an accountable assessment.

When using the alignment process, teachers need to critically look at their assessments to study the degree to which the assessment matches or aligns with the standards. It is highly unlikely that one assessment can match all of the state standards for each unit. As a result, teachers should be providing and using multiple accountability measures for each unit (La Mara, 2001).

Alignment should play a prominent role in teachers deciding what they should be teaching and what they should be assessing. Often there are many standards and it is hard to assess all, so teachers need to prioritize standards during the alignment process.

The Gap and Current Project

As this chapter indicates, there are many different forms of assessment. Over the decades, assessment has changed for many reasons. One of the biggest forces in changing how assessment looks in schools is a better understanding of the relationship between assessment and instruction. From the research, it is clear that many teachers know that offering differentiated assessments should be practiced to increase student learning. Despite this, many teachers still use traditional or common assessments. Clearly, there is a need for further work in differentiated assessment.

My goal is to discover whether a choice of differentiated assessments can lead to better quality assessments and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge so that an instructor can develop and offer more targeted instruction. In my project, I will create differentiated assessments that I will be able to use in my 7th grade United States History students. Once I use the new assessments and determine their effectiveness, as described in Chapter Three, I can share my learning with colleagues and encourage the use of differentiated assessment in my building.

To summarize, this chapter was a literature review of research on major forms of assessment and the impact they have on learning and instruction. It is clear that an effective classroom needs to involve effective, differentiated assessment. Teachers who use differentiated assessment accurately and regularly can empower students and learn more about their understanding of concepts. In Chapter Three I will discuss the specific methods I will use to differentiate assessment.

CHAPTER 3

Project Description

Introduction

This chapter provides context for how this project was developed based on the literature review for the research question: *how can a choice of differentiated assessments lead to better quality assessments and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge in 7th-grade United States History students?* As described in Chapter Two, I researched some different types of assessments, learning styles, and differentiated instruction to create this project. This chapter includes a detailed explanation of the project and its goals, as well as the target audience and education setting.

Project Overview

This capstone project is the creation of new, differentiated assessments for all of the chapters of a seventh grade United States History class. Before the capstone project was implemented in my classroom, at the end of each chapter all students were assessed using the same common assessment. Although these common assessments did meet the learning style needs of some students, they didn't honor all learning styles. These common assessments were created by a team of 7th grade United States History teachers and they were created to align to the state standards. This capstone project allows students a choice of three or four different types of assessments so that more learning styles are taken into consideration. The overall goal of the project is to create a better way to assess students, giving students choice and meeting the needs of more students. These

differentiated assessments will align with state standards and the essential question, so the assessment data will help guide instruction.

The essential question for the first chapter covered in the seventh grade United States History classroom is, *How justifiable was United States expansion in the 1800s?* At the end of the chapter, students are given the choice of four different assessment options: a written assessment; a video assessment; an artistic assessment; or they could propose their own ideas for an assessment (See Appendix A). The written assessment includes two journal entries about one land acquisition by the United States. Students choose the land territory they are interested in writing about, but they need to create one journal entry from two different perspectives. The United States land acquisitions covered are the Louisiana Territory, Florida, Texas, Oregon Country, and the Mexican Cession. For example, students could choose the Louisiana Territory and write a journal entry from the perspective of Thomas Jefferson from the United States and one from Napoleon from the French. The directions are: Please write a one-page journal entry from the perspective of Thomas Jefferson on the Louisiana Purchase. Please be sure to include the answers to the following questions (from Jefferson's perspective): What did most Americans want the Louisiana Territory? Why was the city of New Orleans so important? Jefferson wasn't sure if he should or could purchase the territory, what were some of the reasons for his hesitation? What was the impact of the purchase? Was the purchase justifiable? Then write a second journal entry from the perspective of Napoleon. Please be sure to include the answers to the following questions (from Napoleon's perspective):

What did the French originally plan to do with the territory? Why did their plans change?
What was the impact of the Louisiana purchase? Was it justifiable?

The next assessment choice is for students to create a video of a news segment from two different perspectives about one land acquisition. For example, students could create a news report covering the Florida land acquisition. The directions are to create two five minute videos, one covering the perspective of the United States and one from the perspective of the Spanish. Both segments should cover the answers to the following questions from their respective perspective: What happened? Who was involved? What was Andrew Jackson's role, hero or criminal and why? What was the impact of the acquisition? Was the acquisition justifiable?

The third assessment choice is for students to draw two political cartoons, from two different perspectives of one land acquisition. For example, the student could draw two political cartoons about the Mexican Cession, one that someone might see in a newspaper in the United States and the other that someone might see in a newspaper in Mexico. Each cartoon should include a caption that answers the question, was the acquisition justifiable?

Finally, students could propose an assessment choice of their own that demonstrated their knowledge of the essential question. The directions for these assessments are digitally created so that students and other United States history teachers in the district could access them. The rest of the chapters follow a similar format; there are two or three precreated assessment choices and then an option for students to create their own.

Research Framework

Since this project is created to develop a new way of assessing 7th grade United States curriculum, the *Understanding by Design* framework was used as a guide. “The Understanding by Design framework (UbD framework) offers a planning process and structure to guide curriculum, assessment, and instruction,” (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012, p. 1).

One of the key elements of *Understanding by Design* is that it encourages teachers to think first about assessment before planning a unit and lessons. Teachers need to clearly identify what they want students to know or be able to do at the end of a lesson. Also, *Understanding by Design* has an emphasis on performance-based assessments. The framework encourages teachers to develop assessments that ask students to apply their new learning.

In this capstone project, the guidelines summarized above will be adopted as follows. Assessments were created before the learning activities. These assessments are created to evaluate the students' understanding of the essential questions. In addition, all of the assessment choices offered to the students are performance or project-based assessments.

Setting and Audience

This project takes place in a district that is located in a suburb of a major Midwestern metropolitan area. The district is comprised of nine elementary schools, two middle schools, three high school campuses. In the middle school where the work will take place, there are 76 teachers. There are also 1218 students, 0.3% identified as

American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4.2% identified as Asian, 3.8% identified as Black or African American, 6.6% Hispanic or Latino, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. At the middle school, 23.8% of the students have low socioeconomic status.

More specially, the assessments in the project are implemented in one class of seventh grade United States History students. They are twenty-nine students in the class, three of those students identified themselves as students of color: one African American and two Asian.

The target audience for this project is my classroom. I am using these differentiated assessments with my students for all of the chapters of the school year. Eventually, I would like to share the assessments with other United States History teachers in the school and in the district. The teachers vary in their teacher background and experience. Three of the five teachers currently teaching United States History were part of the team that created the common assessments that are currently used at the end of each chapter.

Project Effectiveness

The effectiveness of this project will be assessed in a couple of ways. First, while the students are working on the assessments I will monitoring their engagement and motivation and I will be writing down my observations of their on task and off-task behaviors. I will be observing student effort, listening for their comments, and questions. Second, I will be evaluating their assessment products. I will use a rubric (See Appendix A) to evaluate their understanding of the essentials questions.

Summary

This chapter gave a description for creating this capstone project to answer the question: *how can a choice of differentiated assessments lead to better quality assessments and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge in 7th grade United States History students?* In this chapter, I first provided an overview of the project. I then described the framework, the setting, the audience, and the timeline for the project.

In chapter four, I will discuss and reflect on the creation and implementation of differentiated assessments. I will also examine the impact that this project has on teaching, learning and student assessment.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusions

When I first started thinking about creating my capstone project, I knew that I wanted to investigate something about student choice. Since I started facilitating the History Day project in my seventh grade U.S. History class, I have noticed that students almost always do their best work for the History Day project. I have often reflected on why students are so motivated to create high-quality projects for History Day. History Day is the one opportunity in my United States History class that students are allowed choice about what type of product they would like to produce to display their learning. This observation led me to wonder if there was a connection between differentiated assessment choices and high-quality student outcomes. With that in mind, I decided to create differentiated assessment choices for all of the chapters in U.S. History to answer the question, *How can a choice of differentiated assessments lead to better quality assessments and a more accurate assessment of student knowledge in 7th grade United States History students?*

Now that I have created the differentiated assessments for each chapter of the text, implemented some of them, and reflected on their effectiveness, chapter four will include a brief summary of the literature review, a description of the finished project and potential implications of the project, limitations of the project, and a reflection on my personal growth as a researcher and developer of this project. First, I will discuss how my literature review shaped my project.

Literature Review

When I created my differentiated assessment project, there were many elements from my literature review that guided and shaped my project. For the project, I focused on summative assessments. Summative assessments are used to summarize student learning, (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006) and they need to align with the learning goals of each unit. I used the essential questions from each chapter and aligned the differentiated assessments with them.

Following the recommendations of Frey & Schmitt (2010), I did not include any traditional assessments such as tests in my project. All of the differentiated assessments in the projects are project or performance-based, which encourage higher-order thinking skills, (Semire, 2003). I also made sure that there were plenty of assessment choices available to highlight student strengths.

According to Ali, 2015, differentiated assessments need to offer students choice in the assessment product. In my project, students have a choice of assessment for every chapter, and I included a student proposal choice for every chapter. For the student proposal, students can present an idea to me for their assessment product. By offering this choice, the assessment can work for all learning styles and it can be flexible enough to fit the needs of all learners, (Ali, 2015). In addition, students could propose to complete their assessment either individually or in a group. According to Perks (2010), choice is also a motivator and it helps to increase student success.

Limitations

One of the limitations of my project is the number of choices of assessment products for each chapter. For some of the chapters, I was able to create three choices

plus a student proposal choice and for some of the chapters, I was only able to create two choices plus the student proposal choice. As I implement and use these differentiated assessments, I am hopeful that I will be able to add more choices. In addition, although I did follow the recommendation of not including any textbook company produced tests in my project, I did include some for the activities from the textbook and I modified them slightly to serve as a summative assessment.

Another limitation is that I have only been able to use a small number of the differentiated assessment choices in my classroom. This is a limitation because, as I use the differentiated assessments I will be able to modify and adjust them as needed to make sure they work well for seventh-grade students. In addition, I will be able to analyze the assessment data to determine how the assessments impact teaching.

Another limitation of my project is that some of the assessment choices are not authentic assessments. All of the assessment choices are performance or project-based and they require students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, but I would like to continue to work to create more authentic or real-world assessments.

Learning from the Capstone Process

Throughout the process of creating this project and writing this capstone, I learned a lot about myself as a researcher, writer and learner. Throughout my life as a student, I have had to do research, but this was the first time I had to find and read a number of different sources on one topic. I learned a lot about how to use and access academic databases and research journals. I also learned how to read through the abstract of an article to determine if it was relevant to my research.

I have always struggled with my writing skills, so this capstone project really pushed me to use a writing process. I had to brainstorm topics before writing every chapter. I made a list of topics that I wanted to write about in each chapter before I started writing. I also learned a lot about APA formatting and citations.

I also learned a lot about myself as a learner. I learned that I really need to set aside or schedule specific time for research. I also learned that I needed to take notes on paper and sometimes I needed to read a source more than once to fully engage with the text.

Project Impact

When discussing my research question with classroom teachers, most people respond with sincere intrigue. It is important for all teachers to realize that we each have the power to make changes to our own classroom practice. As I implement and integrate this type of assessment into my classroom the impact will be on student success and learning.

These differentiated assessments will match each student's individual needs, creating an opportunity for students to better demonstrate learning. The assessments will be flexible and give choice which will increase student motivation and engagement.

Next Steps

There are many potential next steps for this project. In my own practice, I will continue to use the differentiated assessments moving forward. I will be able to add to the assessment choices as students present ideas to me.

The differentiated assessment options that I have included in my project meet the needs of many types of learners and their different learning styles. I would like to continue to build on this project to include tiered activities and scaffolded activities to meet the needs of different ability groups of students.

As I use the assessments, I will collect student data about engagement, motivation, and quality of student assessment products. I will use the data to impact my teaching. I will be able to reflect on student learning to adjust both how much time I am dedicating to content and how I am teaching it.

Next school year I will be able to present the project and the data I collected to the other seventh grade US History teachers so that they have an opportunity to use the differentiated assessment in their classes.

Benefits to the Profession

This project could benefit teachers and students. Teachers could access this project and be encouraged to create and present differentiated assessment choices to their own students. If other teachers did offer differentiated assessments then most likely their students would be more motivated and more likely to create quality assessment products.

Summary

In this final chapter, I revisited the line of thinking that led me to my research question, the topics contained in my literature review including the researchers whose work influenced my learning most, and outlined ways in which my capstone may impact my own and others' assessments.

Often times, as I teacher and a learner, I hear about a new idea or strategy that I would like to implement into my classroom. Too often, because of lack of time and resources, I don't follow through or I try to implement a new idea, but it fails because I didn't give it the time it deserves. This capstone gave me an opportunity to research, created and start to implement an idea that I feel passionate about. This capstone project of differentiated assessments will help me to improve my teaching and meet students' individual needs, therefore enhance the learning of my students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Assessment Directions and Rubric

DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENTS IN A SOCIAL STUDIES MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASS

Units of Study: All of the units in 7th Grade US History (except History Day)

Grade Level: 7th Grade

Subject: U.S. History

Timeframe: the entire school year

This capstone project will allow students a choice of either three or four different types of assessments for each chapter of seventh grade United States History so that more learning styles are taken into consideration.

Here is possible rubric to use to grade the assessments.

	4	3	2	1
Organization of Ideas	All requirements were completed with details	All requirements were completed	Most of the requirements were completed and the organization could use some work	Many missing elements are lacking organization
Demonstrates Impact of event	Demonstrates impact and draws conclusions	Show some impact and draws conclusions	Shows impact but doesn't draw conclusions	Doesn't show the impact
Historical Accuracy	Assessment is historically accurate and supported with details	Assessment is mostly historically Accurate and supported with details	Some historical facts are incorrect	Most historical information is incorrect
Shows knowledge of the answer to the essential question	Complete answer to the essential question	A mostly complete answer to the essential question	Incomplete answer to the essential question	Does not answer the essential question

Manifest Destiny

Chapter Title: Manifest Destiny and the Growing Nation

Essential Question: How justifiable was U.S. expansion in the 1800s?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the changing boundaries of the United States throughout the 1800s • Determine the effects of manifest Destiny on westward expansion in the 1800s • Evaluate the incentives for territorial expansion and the methods used to acquire these lands in the 1800s • Identify different points of view of the land acquisitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms: territory, diplomacy, annex, manifest destiny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory, Florida, Texas, Oregon Country, and the Mexican Cession Land

Manifest Destiny and the Growing Nation Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question, *How justifiable was United States expansion in the 1800s?*** Please select one land acquisition that was covered in Chapter 15 and demonstrate your knowledge of both perspectives by showing how each side would answer the essential question. You may choose one of the following land acquisitions: Louisiana Territory, Florida, Texas, Oregon Country, and the Mexican Cession.

Choice 1: Write two, **one-page journal entries**, one from each side of a United States land acquisition. Write in first person and make sure to include the **who, what, when**, and **why** of your chosen land acquisition. Also please include the **impact** and the **answer** to the **essential question**.

For example: For the Louisiana Territory write a journal entry from the perspective of Thomas Jefferson from the United States and one from Napoleon from the French. Write the journal in first person as if you are Thomas Jefferson or Napoleon and clearly show their perspective.

Choice 2: Create two **five minute videos**, one covering the perspective of the United States and one from the perspective of the other country involved in the land acquisition. Both segments should cover the answers to the following questions from their respective perspective: What happened? Who was involved? What was the impact of the acquisition? Was the acquisition justifiable?

Choice 3: Create two **political cartoons**, from two different perspectives of one land acquisition. One of the cartoons should show the perspective of the United States and the other should show the point of view of the other country involved. Each cartoon should include a caption that answers the question, was the acquisition justifiable? Please use color and labels for clarity.

Choice 4: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question from at least two different perspectives.

Life in the West

Chapter Title: Life in the West

Essential Question: What were the motives, hardships, and legacies of the groups that moved west in the 1800s?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the motives and hardships associated with westward expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: legacy, rancho, forty-niners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lewis and Clark expedition The Oregon Trail People's motives for moving the hardships they faced and the legacies they left behind for future generations

Life in the West Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question, *What were the motives, hardships, and legacies of the groups that moved west in the 1800s?*** Please select one group of people that moved west covered in Chapter 16 and demonstrate your knowledge of their motives, hardships, and legacies. You may choose one of the following groups of people: explorers, Californios, mountain men, missionaries, pioneer women, Mormons, forty-niners, or Chinese.

Choice 1: Create a **first person journal**, for one of the groups that moved west. Write one paragraph that **describes the motives** that led your group west (written in first person). Then write one paragraph that describes the **hardships** your group faced along the way (written in first person). Finally, write one paragraph that describes the **impact** your group made in the west.

Choice 2: Create a **folk song** that details the experiences of one or more of the groups of people who moved west. Choose a tune you know for the melody. Then write four

stanzas of four lines each. The song needs to include: **at least one motive** for a group, **at least one hardship** this group faced, **at least one legacy** this group left behind.

Choice 3: Create a **Google Presentation** for one of the groups that moved West. The presentation needs to include: **reasons your group moved to the West with an image, hardships your group faced with an image, and legacies your group left behind with an image.**

Choice 4: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question for one of the groups that moved west.

An Era of Reform

Chapter Title: An Era of Reform

Essential Question: To what extent did the reform movements of the mid-1800s improve life for Americans?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate how well reform movements improved life for Americans Explain the contributions of such reformers as Horace Mann, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglas, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: reform, transcendentalism, abolitionist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Second Great Awakening, the Seneca Fall Convention, and the Declaration of Sentiments

An Era of Reform Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to show your mastery of the essential question, *To what extent did the reform movements of the mid-1800s improve life for Americans?*

Choice 1: Please complete the following chart:

Reform Movement	What was the GOAL of this movement?	Who was one person and what was their contribution(s)?	What ACTIONS were taken to allow this movement to accomplish their goal more successfully?	What actions COULD HAVE been taken to make this movement more successful? (How could they have made accomplishing their goal EASIER?)
Prison Reform Movement		Person: Contribution:	1. 2.	1. 2.
Education Movement		Person: Contribution:	1. 2.	1. 2.
Abolitionist Movement		Person: Contribution:	1. 2.	1. 2.
Women's Rights Movement		Person: Contribution:	1. 2.	1. 2.

Choice 2: Write a **Letter to a Reformer**. The letter should contain: an introduction that reviews some of the reformer's accomplishments and two paragraphs that describe the extent to which the related reform movement improved life for Americans.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Worlds of North and South

Chapter Title: The Worlds of North and South

Essential Question: How was life in the North different from life in the South

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast the geographies, economies, transportation, and the societies of the North and the South during the 1800s. • Explain the effects of new inventions and manufacturing methods on the North and the South 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms: deforestation, agrarian, plantation, cotton gin, industrialish, immigrant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Industrial Revolution

The Worlds of North and South Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to show your mastery of the essential question, *How was life in the North different from life in the South?*

Choice 1: Create a **Venn Diagram** highlighting the similarities and differences between the North and the South. The Venn Diagram must include at least two examples from each of these aspects of life - geography, economy, transportation, and society.

Choice 2: Write an **essay** describing how life in the North differs from life in the South. Your essay must include a paragraph about each of these aspects of life - geography, economy, transportation, and society.

Choice 3: Create a **drawing** of the North and a drawing of the South to show how life was different in the two places. In each drawing, include at least one key feature of the area's geography, economy, transportation, and society. Label and describe each key feature on your drawing.

Choice 4: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

African Americans in the Mid-1800s

Chapter Title: African Americans in the Mid-1800s

Essential Question: How did African American face slavery and discrimination in the mid-1800s?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe aspects of slave life and forms of resistance to slavery Describe how slaves faced slavery and discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: racism, discrimination, segregation, oppression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Underground Railroad and Nat Turner's Rebellion

African Americans in the Mid-1800s Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *How did African Americans face slavery and discrimination in the mid-1800s?*

Choice 1: Create a **quilt square** out of paper. African Americans used quilts as bed coverings, but the squares of the quilts told stories. The stories were usually of Bible stories, personal stories of the slave and his or her family, stories of freedom, or sometimes the quilts were maps of the Underground Railroad. Create a quilt square that tells a story of slave resistance.

Choice 2: Write an **essay** answering the two questions: How did African Americans show that they were neither humbled nor crushed by prejudice and discrimination? How did African Americans show spirit? Show your knowledge of at least 3 of the following: living conditions, working conditions, resistance efforts, slave communities and families, leisure time activities, slave churches, and African American culture (quilts, song, dance, & folktales)

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

A Dividing Nation

Chapter Title: A Dividing Nation

Essential Question: Which events of the mid-1800s kept the nation together and which events pulled it apart?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trace the effects of territorial expansion on the debate over slavery Analyze the impact of key events on the antislavery movement and on the Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: Union, fugitive, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, the Dred Scott decision, and the Lincoln-Douglas debates

A Dividing Nation Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to show your mastery of the essential question, *Which events of the mid-1800s kept the nation together and which events pulled it apart?*

Choice 1: Choose **two** of these laws: the **Missouri Compromise**, the **Compromise of 1850**, or the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**. Write an **essay explaining** how the **two events** tried to pull the nation together and how these same events eventually pushed the nation further apart.

Choice 2: Choose **one** of these laws: the **Missouri Compromise**, the **Compromise of 1850**, or the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**. Write a **letter to the editor** explaining how you believe that law pulled the nation the furthest apart.

Choice 9: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question

The Civil War

Chapter Title: The Civil War

Essential Question: What factors and events influenced the outcome of the Civil War?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the Union and the Confederacy at the outbreak of the Civil War to predict the outcome of the war • Explain the Union's Anaconda Plan • Explain how key events of the Civil War, affected soldiers and civilians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms: Confederacy, civil war, Emancipation Proclamation, habeas corpus, Gettysburg Address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surrender at Appomattox Court House

The Civil War Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices.. You need to complete **one choice** to show your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *What factors and events influenced the outcome of the Civil War?*

Choice 1: Write a **journal entry** from the perspective of a soldier or a civilian during the Civil War. Your journal entry should include: a historically accurate date and location, a description of the key events or battles of the war so far, and a description of your experiences as a soldier or civilian during a key event of battle and how it affected you.

Choice 2: Draw a **map of the South** that shows the steps of the Anaconda Plan. Explain what the Union army and navy did to put each of the steps in action during the Civil War. In your description of the events, include what the Union army and navy did to put each of the steps in action in 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, and 1865.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Reconstruction Era

Chapter Title: The Reconstruction Era

Essential Question: To what extent did Reconstruction bring African Americans closer to full citizenship?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cite examples and purposes of black codes • Illustrate the effects of Reconstruction on African Americans' pursuit of full citizenship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms: black codes, civil rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstruction, the Thirteenth Amendment, Freedmen's Bureau, the Fourteenth Amendment, the Fifteenth Amendment, and Jim Crow laws

The Reconstruction Era Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to show your mastery of the essential question, *To what extent did Reconstruction bring African Americans closer to full citizenship?*

Choice 1: Create an **illustration of a road map** that shows the important events of Reconstruction and their impact on African Americans' journey toward full citizenship. Your road map should:

- show the **progress** and **setbacks** that African Americans experienced in their struggle for full citizenship during Reconstruction. For example, **hills, twists, and turns** away from full citizenship might show **setbacks**, while **straight paths and bridges** might show **progress**.
- include **symbols, pictures, and labels** for at least **two events** from **each phase of Reconstruction**. **Stop signs, potholes, and roadblocks** might show events that **prevented progress** toward full citizenship. **High-speed-limit signs or freeway signs** might show events that **helped** African Americans to achieve their goals.

- have a caption summarizing to what extent Reconstruction brought African Americans closer to full citizenship.

Choice 2: Write an **essay** describing at least three ways the government tried to guarantee African Americans full citizenship during Reconstruction. Then describe three ways that various groups tried to deny African Americans full citizenship during Reconstruction.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

Tensions in the West

Chapter Title: Tensions in the West

Essential Question: How did settlers change the West and affect American Indians?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the groups that came west following the Civil War Evaluate the effects of western settlement on American Indians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: reservation, homesteader, transcontinental railroad, subsidy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The clash between American Indians and settlers that resulted from settlement of the frontier

Tensions in the West Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *How did settlers change the West and affect American Indians?*

Choice 1: Write an **essay** describing two events or policies that increased settlement in the West after the Civil War. Describe how the settlers who responded to each of these events or policies changed the West. Also explain how each event or policy affected American Indians?

Choice 2: Write **two acrostic poems** about the clash of cultures that resulted from the settlement of the West. One poem should be from the perspective of white settlers. The other should be from the perspective of American Indians. Begin the lines in each poem with the letters in the word settlement.

Settlers' View of
Settlement of the West

Swiftly we came by railroad and horse.

E
T
T
L
E
M
E
N
T

American Indians' View of
Settlement of the West

Settlers invaded our lands from the
East

E
T
T
L
E
M
E
N
T

Choice 3: Create a **Google Presentation** about “The Heart of the Appaloosa.” In the presentation explain the meaning behind each line in the song.

Choice 4: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Rise of Industry

Chapter Title: The Rise of Industry

Essential Question: Did the benefits of industrialization outweigh the costs?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain how industrialists created big businesses ● Compare and contrast the costs and benefits of industrialization ● Evaluate the success of the labor movement in improving the conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key terms: entrepreneur, laissez-faire, mass production, corporation, trust, monopoly, urbanization, labor union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assembly line work and working conditions of the period ● The impact of inventions of the period

The Rise of Industry Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to show your mastery of the essential question, *Did the benefits of industrialization outweigh the costs?*

Choice 1: Write an **essay** that responds to these three questions.

- In the late 19th century, what conditions allowed for the growth of industry in the United States?
- How did industrialization improve life in the United States?
- How did industrialization hurt life in the United States?

Choice 2: Write a **dialogue** between a factory owner and a worker that highlights the costs and benefits of industrialization in the early 1900s. The dialogue must include at least four concerns of workers at the turn of the century and a response by the factory owner to each concern.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Great Wave of Immigration

Chapter Title: The Great Wave of Immigration

Essential Question: What was life like for immigrants in the early 1900s?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast experiences of immigrant groups • Describe the journeys of immigrants to the United States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms: refugee, assimilation, pogrom, passport, nativism, quota 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What life was like for U.S. immigrants

The Great Wave of Immigration Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *What was life like for immigrants in the early 1900s?*

Choice 1: Create a **scrapbook** (in first person) highlighting what life was like for a U.S. immigrant in the early 1900s. The scrapbook will contain biographical information, notes about the journey from the home country, and descriptions of life in the United States.

Choice 2: Write a **letter** as if you are an immigrant to the United States in the early 1900s. Address the letter to a family member in your native country describing your trip to the United States and your experiences so far. Be sure to include a description of why you left your native country, a description of your trip to the United States, and a description of where you live and what life is like in the United States.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Progressive Era

Chapter Title: The Progressive Era

Essential Question: Did the progressives improve life in the United States?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the effects of urbanization and industrialization on the environment and society Analyze the success of Progressive reforms in the areas of government, child labor, workers' rights, conservation, equal rights for African Americans, and women's suffrage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: platform, regulation, conservation, suffrage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Progressive movement, the Populist Party, social Darwinism

The Progressive Era Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to show your **mastery** of the **essential question, Did the progressives improve life in the United States?**

Choice 1: Write an **essay** about the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. Describe one specific condition that needed to be changed during the Progressive Era. Describe in detail what an individual or a group did to change that condition. Use specific facts and examples. Evaluate the reform measure you described. Explain how life in the United States improved or did not improve due to the efforts of progressives.

Choice 2: Write a short speech, from the perspective of one of the reformers in chapter 26. Write five sentences about what rights are being denied to a group of people AND why you believe it is important for that group to have the rights.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The United States Becomes a World Power

Chapter Title: The United States Becomes a World Power

Essential Question: Should U.S. actions in world affairs around the turn of the 20th century be praised or condemned?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize arguments for and against U.S. expansion Examine U.S. involvement in WWI and the subsequent peace negotiations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: imperialism, yellow journalism, nationalism, militarism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How the United States gained control of the Panama Canal WWI

The United States Becomes a World Power Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *Should U.S. actions in world affairs around the turn of the 20th century be praised or condemned?*

Choice 1: Create a **political cartoon** that shows your praise or disapproval of U.S. expansionism around the turn of the century. Your cartoon should include important people, exaggerated details and a caption.

Choice 2: Write an **essay** debating U.S. actions in world affairs at the turn of the 20th century. Write one paragraph praising U.S. actions in the 20th century. Write one paragraph condemning U.S. actions at the turn of the 20th century. Finally, considering the two sides of the issue, write **one final paragraph** in which you take a side. Which side of U.S. actions do you support?

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression

Chapter Title: The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression

Essential Question: What trends, events, and people shaped the 1920s and the 1930s?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify causes of the Great Depression and factors that led to an extended period of economic collapse in the United States. Describe the impact of the Great Depression on United States society, including ethnic and racial minorities, and how government responded to events with New Deal policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: consumer goods, credit, depression, pension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the economic, social, and political development of the United States in the period between World War I and World War II. The Great Migration The Harlem Renaissance The Red Scare The New Deal

The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *What trends, events, and people shaped the 1920s and the 1930s?*

Choice 1: Write an essay answering the question: Was the expansion of government during the New Deal beneficial for all Americans?

Your essay should include the following:

- A clear topic sentence that communicates the main idea of your paragraph
- Two pieces of evidence (facts, data, quotes, examples) from the reading to support

your topic sentence

- Two sentences that explain how your evidence supports your topic sentence.

Choice 2: Write an **essay** describing how the responsibilities of the federal government changed during the Great Depression. • Describe why the Great Depression hurt many American citizens • Provide two examples of the federal government's response to the depression. • Explain why these responses changed the role and size of the central government in American society.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

World War II

Chapter Title: World War II

Essential Question: How did World War II change the United States?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain the causes and conduct of World War II including the nations involved, major political and military figures and key battles, and the Holocaust. ● Analyze how the United States mobilized its economic and military resources during World War II. ● Describe the impact of World War II on the home front. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key terms: fascism, totalitarian, atomic bomb, war crime, bond, inflation, internment camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● D-Day ● The Holocaust

World War II Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question, *How did World War II change the United States?***

Choice 1: Read the passages below which offer different views on the United States decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan. Then follow the directions to complete the item below.

"I knew what I was doing when I stopped the war that would have killed a half million youngsters on both sides if those bombs had not been dropped. I have no regrets and, under the same circumstances, I would do it again."

--Letter from Harry S Truman, 1963

“Military necessity will be our constant cry in answer to criticism, but it will never erase from our minds the simple truth that we, of all civilized nations... did not hesitate to employ the most destructive weapon of all times indiscriminately against men, women and children.”

--United States News editor David Lawrence, 1945

Was the use of atomic bombs necessary to end World War II?

Write an essay explaining whether you believe the United States was justified in its use of the atomic bomb.

- Describe why the United States government decided to develop nuclear weapons.
- If you believe the United States was justified in dropping atomic bombs on Japan, explain why the bombings were necessary.
- If you believe the United States was not justified, explain why another solution would have been better.
- Refer to one of the primary source quotes above when making your argument.

Choice 2: Create a commemorative stamp set that shows how World War II affected the people of the United States. Your stamp set must include at least four stamps. • Two stamps should commemorate two groups included in the radio broadcasts: members of the military, the government, consumers, women, Japanese Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, or Jewish Americans. • Two stamps should commemorate two major battles in World War II. • Each stamp should include images or symbols to represent the impact of World War II on the group or the importance of the battle. • Each stamp should contain a short caption that explains the stamp.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Cold War

Chapter Title: The Cold War

Essential Question: How did rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union shape the world in the years after World War II?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify military and non-military actions taken by the United States during the Cold War to resist the spread of communism. Analyze the social and political effects of the Cold War on the people of the United States. Compare and contrast the involvement and role of the United States in global conflicts and acts of cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: United Nations, capitalism, communism, containment, blacklist, arms race, proxy war 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Marshall Plan The Cold War

The Cold War Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *How did rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union shape the world in the years after World War II?*

Choice 1: The events of the Cold War profoundly affected the lives of everyday Americans. In an **essay**, explain how each of the following affected life in the United States:

- fear of the atomic bomb
- fear of communists within the United States

- proxy wars in foreign nations

Choice 2: Write a **short memo** to President Eisenhower to advise him what to do in response to Sputnik. Be sure to address each of the following points in your memo, and remember that this information is confidential! • What should President Eisenhower say to the American people about Sputnik? • What should President Eisenhower say to the rest of the world? • What should President Eisenhower do to make sure the United States does not fall behind the Soviet Union in science and technology? • What should President Eisenhower do to make sure the United States does not fall behind the Soviet Union in the space race?

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

The Civil Rights Movement

Chapter Title: The Civil Rights Movement

Essential Question: How did civil rights activists improve life for African Americans?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the effects of discrimination and segregation on American society. Identify important leaders, events, and legislation of the civil rights era. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of non-violent resistance. Compare and contrast the goals and tactics of the civil rights movement, the American Indian movement, and the women's rights movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: nonviolent resistance, integration, sit-in, black power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown v. Board of Education

The Civil Rights Movement Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete **one choice** to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *How did civil rights activists improve life for African Americans?*

Choice 1: Civil rights activists used many different techniques to improve the lives of African Americans. In an **essay**, explain TWO different strategies civil rights activists used to achieve their goals. For each strategy you choose, write a paragraph in which you:

- describe the strategy
- explain what activists hoped to accomplish using this strategy
- name the leaders or groups associated with the strategy
- evaluate how well the strategy worked – what reforms or changes did the strategy help bring about?
- Then, in a short concluding paragraph, analyze which of the strategies you described was most successful, and explain why.

Choice 2: Create a newspaper article covering an important event in the civil rights movement. Choose one event that you think had an especially important impact on improving life for African Americans. When creating your article, be sure to include: • an accurate date and location. • a description of the event you are covering: Where are you? What do you see? Who is there? Why are they there? • two quotations, one from a source who supports the event and one from a source who opposes the event—you may choose to invent quotes or do research to find primary source quotes to include in your article. • your analysis of why this event was important to the civil rights movement and how it helped improve life for African Americans.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

Contemporary American Society

Chapter Title: Contemporary American Society

Essential Question: What changes since the 1950s have shaped how we live today?

Chapter Objectives:

Students will be able to...	Students will know...	Students will understand...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify major social and cultural trends that affected the United States from the 1950s through the 2000s. Describe how new technologies have changed political, economic, and social interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key terms: baby boom, Great Society, counterculture, hostage, “war on drugs,” AIDS, Internet, terrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing role of the federal government in shaping post-war society.

Contemporary American Society Differentiated Assessments

Directions: Please read over the list of assessment choices. You need to complete one choice to **show** your **mastery** of the **essential question**, *What changes since the 1950s have shaped how we live today?*

Choice 1: Write **an essay** in which you answer the question: Has globalization been an overall positive or negative force for the world? In your paragraph, be sure you:

- clearly state your position
- give two concrete examples to defend your position
- describe one argument someone taking the opposite position might make and explain why the argument you are making is stronger
- make sure and have a concluding sentence that sums up your argument

Choice 2: The adults you know have lived through many or all of the changes you have just read about. **Interview** one of the oldest, most interesting people you know and create a timeline of events that have shaped that person’s life. During the interview, listen carefully and take notes on a separate sheet of paper. • Share some of the events

from this lesson with your interviewee. Ask him or her to describe any of these events that he or she lived through. • Have your interviewee identify the four historic events that had the greatest effect on his or her life. • Ask the person to describe how these events have shaped his or her life. • After the interview, place those four events on the timeline below. Include the date, a one sentence summary, and an illustration for each event. Draw a line from each event to the correct place on the timeline. • On a separate sheet of paper, write a short, four-paragraph essay explaining how each of the four events shaped your interviewee's life.

Choice 3: Propose an idea to me for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential question.

